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Sigmund Transactional Analysis, Inc.

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The Ten-Minute Practice

This simple, daily practice is based on three underlying premises:

- 1) Every part of your life where you experience confusion, conflict, drama or pain represents a part of yourself that you are no longer intimate with.**

The word “intimate” derives from the Latin root *intimus*, which means “within.” Intimacy results from truly knowing your “inmost character,” your most private and personal self. The painful areas of your life are those where you have never learned to listen to yourself, to look within at moments of difficulty and stress. Instead, you react with thoughts, feelings and behaviors you learned as a child—predictable patterns that you act out compulsively (without thinking), regardless of the true nature of the problem, without awareness of your thoughts and actions.

These repetitive patterns are unconscious; you aren't aware that you're doing them. Your compulsive thoughts, feelings and actions have remained unexamined and unchallenged since you were a child younger than six. Once you start to listen to yourself, you'll discover that every time you fall into one of these reactive patterns, your internal dialogue is negative. Most times, you will also discover that what you are saying to yourself does not reflect the truth about you, other persons, the situation, and/or the environment.

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2) Negative thoughts do not help you to accurately identify a problem or find its solution. On the contrary, negative thoughts *interfere* with the natural process of problem resolution by introducing distracting thoughts and unproductive behaviors.

When you react with fear, anger or hurt to defend yourself in a situation, you're not focusing on accurately identifying the problem, why it's significant to you, or what you need to do to resolve it.

3) Negativity always harms the person who is thinking or doing it.

Whenever you try to cope with difficulty or stress through negative thoughts or behavior, you fall into one of the three roles on the Drama Triangle: the Persecutor (the person who does wrong to others), the Rescuer (the person who takes care of others who should take care of themselves), or the Victim (the person who is wronged by the Persecutor and saved by the Rescuer).

Roles are not life. They are compulsive reenactments that keep the problem figuratively alive. Each time you engage in one of these roles, you suffer and cause suffering in others.

Doing the Ten-Minute Practice will help you become aware of your unconscious, negative thoughts. Like most people who begin this practice, you may be amazed at all the negative thoughts you've been thinking *without being aware of them*—and how rooted in perceptions of persecution, victimization and rescue the negative thoughts are. As awareness grows, it becomes easier to see the direct, one-to-one relationship between negative thoughts and an ongoing undercurrent of painful, emotional reactions in your life.

Negative thoughts and emotions create uncomfortable physical states in the body—the learned physiological reaction to difficulties and stress. Reversing the negativity frees your creative–intuitive intelligence, which you can then direct toward identifying and solving the problem, and relieving the suffering.

How to do the Ten-Minute Practice

Find a place that is free of distractions. Take what you like to write on and what you like to write with, and as you sit down to do the practice, say to yourself, “I want to hear every negative thought I’m thinking, whether it’s about myself, other people, a situation or the environment. I’m not listening to become depressed or to do harm. I am listening to bring the negatives into my awareness and to resolve them.” Then, for ten minutes, listen to your internal dialogue, word for word. Every time you hear a negative statement, write down a statement that’s the exact, 180-degree opposite. That is all this practice requires. For ten minutes, you simply listen within yourself for negative statements and write down their opposites. For example, if the first time you sat down to do the Ten-Minute Practice, you heard yourself thinking, “Eric’s a *jerk* for *telling* me to do this *stupid* practice!” you write the opposite: “Eric’s a *nice* guy for *asking* me to do this *interesting* practice.”

The Ten-Minute Practice is not the same as the practice called Positive Affirmations, in which the person writes down positive issues to reinforce them. The Ten-Minute Practice is not a reality test; you don’t have to believe that the positive statements you write are true. Imagine yourself like the craftsman who patiently, steadily removes rusty old bolts that no longer function, and replaces them with new, stainless-steel bolts that do. In this mechanical sense, the *content* of the negative thoughts is less important than the active process of changing them. Even if a specific negative is your favorite, your most “true” negative, during the Ten-Minute Practice we want you to simply reverse its negatives and move on.

If you find your practice being disrupted by thoughts such as, “I can’t hear anything negative” (which is itself negative and false), write, “I can hear anything I need to hear.” If your practice is disrupted by the thought, “My mind is blank” (again a negative and a lie), write, “My mind is full of thoughts.”

At the end of the ten minutes, stop and go on to whatever is next in your life. Do the Ten-Minute Practice once a day, every day.